

Education QA Monitoring Visit Report Summary

Approved Education Institution	Anglia Ruskin University
Programme(s) monitored	<p>BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) BSc (Hons) Nursing (Child) BSc (Hons) Nursing (Mental Health) BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) [apprenticeship route] BSc (Hons) Nursing (Child) [apprenticeship route] BSc (Hons) Nursing (Mental Health) [apprenticeship route] BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult and Mental Health) BSc (Hons) Nursing (Child and Mental Health)</p> <p>FdSc Nursing Associate FdSc Nursing Associate (apprenticeship)</p>
Campuses and satellite site	<p>ARU Cambridge ARU Chelmsford ARU Peterborough College of West Anglia (satellite site for the Nursing Associate apprenticeship only)</p>
Date of monitoring visit	13 – 16 June 2023
Date of report publication	01 November 2023

Introduction

This document is a summary explaining our Quality Assurance (QA) process for monitoring education institutions and their practice learning partners. We also explain why we commissioned a monitoring visit of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) by independent visitors, its findings and the action plan we have since put in place. For the full independent report please [click here](#). Throughout this period, we have welcomed the cooperation of Anglia Ruskin University and the NHSE WTE team in the East of England.

ARU are an approved education institution (AEI) in the East of England region, approved to deliver pre-registration nursing, nursing associate, pre-registration midwifery and post-reg provision. In the annual self report 2021-22, ARU report the highest overall student numbers (across all NMC approved provision) of any AEI in the UK. ARU are the fifth largest provider of pre-registration nursing programmes and the second largest provider of nursing associate programmes. ARU have plans for the further diversification and growth of their provision, with major modification events planned for both the nursing and nursing associate programmes in 2023. The major modifications will support the addition of a new field of nursing practice (learning disabilities) and alternative routes through the programme including a masters, dual award and second field of practice with advanced standing route (recognition of prior learning) for registered nurses.

The NMC

As the professional regulator of nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England, we work to ensure these professionals have the knowledge and skills to deliver consistent, quality care that keeps people safe.

We set the education standards professionals must achieve to practise in the United Kingdom. When they have shown both clinical excellence and a commitment to kindness, compassion and respect, we welcome them onto our register of more than 788,000 professionals.

Once registered, nurses, midwives and nursing associates must uphold the standards and behaviours set out in our Code so that people can have confidence that they will consistently receive quality, safe care wherever they're treated. We promote lifelong learning through revalidation, encouraging professionals to reflect on their practice and how The Code applies in their day-to-day work.

Our role in the quality assurance of education

We set the standards of education and training that enable students to achieve our standards of proficiency before joining the register. We approve education institutions to deliver nursing, nursing associate or midwifery programmes. As part of our ongoing educational quality assurance (QA), we monitor all of our approved education institutions (AEIs) and their practice learning partners (PLPs) to ensure they continue to meet our standards.

Our QA framework and accompanying [QA handbook](#) provide detail on the QA process and the evidence education institutions need to demonstrate to satisfy us that they meet our standards for education and training.

Where we have concerns that an approved education institution may not be meeting our standards, we may seek an independent QA visitors' report by way of a monitoring visit or an extraordinary review, and we may even decide to withdraw approval of the programme and/or an institution. Internally we have a QA Board which provides oversight of our ongoing education QA activity, and our Professional Practice directorate provides regular updates to our Council in relation to our QA activities.

Background

ARU demonstrate good compliance with NMC processes for exceptionally reporting risks within the academic and/or practice environment. However, since August 2022 the volume of exceptional reports has increased and there is a theme within some of the reports identifying concerns with internal processes. These exceptional reports are in addition to open concerns with which ARU are proactively engaging with the NMC, relating to approved employer partners and practice learning partners.

The NMC education QA team commenced regular concern meetings with ARU to discuss all open exceptional reports and concerns from October 2022. Prior to this, concerns were discussed with ARU as and when required and separately discussed with Health Education England (now NHS England Workforce, Training and Education Directorate (NHSE WTE)) in our regular regional meetings.

Due to the nature of the concerns identifying issues with ARU's internal processes, the QA Board decided it was appropriate to undertake a monitoring visit at ARU across the pre-registration nursing and nursing associate provision. It was agreed a monitoring visit would enable independent QA Visitors to view and triangulate evidence regarding the partnerships, delivery and governance of the nursing and nursing associate programmes (direct-entry and apprenticeship pathways).

Our concerns are that there is a risk to ARU's nursing associate and pre-registration nursing programmes meeting the education and training standards in both the academic and practice learning environment. These concerns stem from:

- Regular intelligence received through NMC meetings with ARU about the integrity of the university's internal governance systems that support student progression and completion of programmes,
- Partnership working between ARU and PLPs to support student learning,
- The high number of exceptional reports submitted to the NMC where risks have been self-identified by ARU,
- Rapid growth of the programmes and capacity to support this growth in both the academic university environment and across practice learning partners,
- The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspection in May 2022, whose report highlights three areas which require improvement: the quality of education, leadership and management and apprenticeships. Significantly the report highlighted concerns of discrepancy between the number of hours those on an apprenticeship route were working and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requirements, which has caused disruption to student experience and EP expectations.

The monitoring review process

The NMC provided the independent QA visit team with a monitoring review plan, which identified the NMC requirements for monitoring, under the five themes of the Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education (SFNME) (NMC, 2018 updated 2023):

1. Learning culture
2. Educational governance and quality
3. Student empowerment
4. Educators and assessors
5. Curricula and assessment

The review plan indicated specific requirements within the Standards framework for the QA visitors to scrutinise and triangulate evidence from findings during the visit.

The QA monitoring visit team included a lead QA visitor, two lay visitors and two registrant visitors with due regard for the programmes under review.

The QA visit team used the review plan to direct their focus for triangulating the evidence in academic and practice learning settings. Although visits to two practice learning partners was planned, due to external circumstances only one physical practice learning partner visit was undertaken.

The QA visit team concluded their findings verbally to ARU on the final day of the visit (16 June 2023) and then provided a full a report, mapped against the NMC standards and requirements.

Findings

Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education (SFNME) (NMC, 2023)		
Theme	Risk Statement	Outcome
1. Learning culture	1.1 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners are unable to evidence that the learning culture prioritises the safety of people, including carers, students and educators, and enables the values of The Code (NMC, 2018) to be upheld.	Standard 1.1 is not met
	<p>Summary of the monitoring visit findings against standard 1.1: The visit team report finding established systems and processes to seek feedback from students in relation to their programmes. However, there are inconsistencies in how ARU responds to student's feedback, complaints and concerns and students reported this can impact on their wellbeing.</p> <p>ARU, together with their PLPs/EPs, were unable to evidence that the learning culture in all environments consistently prioritised the safety and wellbeing of students and enabled the values of the NMC Code to be upheld. The visit team were not assured that concerns or complaints affecting the wellbeing of students were addressed immediately and effectively by ARU.</p>	
	1.2 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners are unable to evidence that education and training is valued in all learning environments.	Standard 1.2 is met
2. Educational governance and quality	2.1 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners are unable to evidence there are effective governance systems that ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements, differentiating where appropriate between the devolved legislatures of the UK with clear lines of accountability for meeting those requirements and responding when standards are not met, in all learning environments. <i>(This includes Part 3: Programme specific standards)</i>	Standard 2.1 is not met
	<p>Summary of the monitoring visit findings against standard 2.1: The visit team concluded that ARU, together with their PLPs/EPs, are unable to evidence there are effective governance systems that ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements. There wasn't assurance of clear lines of accountability in all learning environments for meeting those requirements and responding when standards aren't met. There wasn't assurance that the programme complies with all relevant NMC regulatory requirements in relation to simulated practice learning. The team weren't assured that there's clear lines of communication between ARU and their PLPs/EPs. Finally, the visit team weren't assured that ARU and their PLPs/EPs are consistently proactive in responding to areas for improvement in relation to system regulator reports and outcomes.</p>	
	2.2 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners is unable to ensure all learning environments optimise safety and quality, taking account of the diverse needs of, and working in partnership with, service users, students and all other stakeholders. <i>(This includes Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment)</i>	Standard 2.2 is met

3. Student empowerment	<p>3.1 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners is unable to ensure all students are provided with a variety of learning opportunities and appropriate resources which enable them to achieve proficiencies and programme outcomes and be capable of demonstrating the professional behaviours in The Code (NMC, 2018).</p>	Standard 3.1 is not met
	<p>Summary of the monitoring visit findings against standard 3.1: The visit team found that ARU, together with their PLPs/EPs, are unable to ensure all students are provided with a variety of learning opportunities and appropriate resources which enable them to achieve proficiencies and programme outcomes and be capable of demonstrating the professional behaviours in the NMC Code. ARU do not respond to students in a timely and accurate manner in relation to information about their curriculum, assessment and practice placements. The team were not assured that students are consistently supernumerary or are able to make best use of their protected learning time.</p>	
	<p>3.2 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners is unable to ensure all students are empowered and supported to become resilient, caring, reflective and lifelong learners who are capable of working in inter-professional and inter-agency teams.</p>	Standard 3.2 is not met
<p>Summary of the monitoring visit findings against standard 3.2: There was a lack of assurance that all students are empowered and supported to become resilient, caring, reflective and lifelong learners who can work in inter-professional and inter-agency teams. The visit team were not assured that students consistently have their diverse needs considered and adjustments provided in assessments or that students are protected from discrimination in PLP/EP environments. There weren't always opportunities for students to feedback on the quality of their education in all learning environments.</p>		
4. Educators and assessors	<p>4.1 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners is unable to ensure theory and practice learning and assessment are facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles.</p>	Standard 4.1 is not met
	<p>Summary of the monitoring visit findings against standard 4.1: Theory and practice learning and assessment were not always facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles. The visit team lacked assurance that educators and assessors always act as professional role models. The visitor team found that practice assessors and practice supervisors do not always have supported time to enable them to fulfil their roles in the practice assessment of students. There was a lack of assurance that educators and assessors always respond effectively to the learning needs of students.</p>	
5. Curricula and assessment	<p>5.1 The AEI, together with their practice learning partners is unable to ensure that curricula and assessments are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated to ensure that students achieve the proficiencies and outcomes for their approved programme. <i>(This includes programme specific Standards of Proficiency)</i></p>	Standard 5.1 is met

Next steps and action planning

In July 2023, the monitoring visit report was shared with ARU for observations and factual accuracy checking. Following this period of observations, factual accuracy amendments were made to the final report on 08 August 2023.

In response to the risks identified, an action plan was developed and refined by ARU, supported by the lead QA visitor. The agreed action plan was submitted to the NMC.

On the 21 September 2023, the QA Board met and discussed the findings of the monitoring visit.

On the 05 October 2023, an Extraordinary QA Board was held to formally review ARU's action plan. The decision was made at the QA Board to escalate ARU's nursing and nursing associate programmes to the level of a critical concern for education.

The NMC QA Team will now meet with ARU on a six weekly basis to discuss the action plan and seek evidence of their progress against each of the NMC Standards.

Progress will be formally overseen by the QA Board, to ensure appropriate, robust and timely action is being taken to address the concerns.